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ABSTRACT

This lay version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the original version was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948) has been written in simplified vocabulary to make it understandable to a wider range of ages and reading abilities. The declaration consists of a preamble followed by a listing of 30 goals common to all peoples and all nations. The goals deal with civil, political, economic, educational, social and cultural rights. (JH)

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Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

A Lay Version for the Common Man, Woman and Child*

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**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948.*

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Preamble

SINCE (1) all people must understand that each member of the human family is a worthwhile person and that each member of the human family has the same rights as every other member has, before there can be freedom, justice, and peace in every part of the world,

SINCE (2) neglect and scorn of human rights have caused many terrible acts to be committed which have shocked the conscience of the people, and since a world in which everyone can say and believe what he or she wishes, and in which everyone can be free of fear and need, is the highest hope of all people,

SINCE (3) it is necessary to have everyone's rights protected by the rule of law so that the people will not have to fight against tyrants,

SINCE (4) it is necessary to encourage and work for friendly relations between all nations,

SINCE (5) the peoples of the United Nations have in the United Nations' Charter agreed that they believe in basic human rights, that they believe that all members of the human family are worthwhile, that they believe that men and women should have the same rights, and that they are going to do whatever they can so that each member of the human family shall live better and in greater freedom,

SINCE (6) the nations of the United Nations have promised to cooperate with the United Nations to encourage and work for worldwide respect for the rights and freedoms of all people,

SINCE (7) it is of the greatest importance that the nations of the United Nations understand exactly what these rights and freedoms are so that they can carry out their promises,

SO NOW, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SAYS

This Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets common goals for all peoples and all nations to try to reach (1) by teaching respect for the rights and freedoms named in this Declaration and (2) by laws recognizing and protecting these rights and freedoms. Every person and every part of society, using these methods and keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall work toward these common goals.

GOAL 1 All members of the human family are born free and equal in their worth and in their rights. They all know how to think; they all know the difference between right and wrong; and they should act toward each other in the spirit of one indivisible family.

GOAL 2 All members of the human family have by birth all the rights and freedoms named in this Declaration no matter what race they belong to, no matter what color they are, no matter which sex they are, no matter what language they speak, no matter what religion they believe in, no matter what political or other opinion they have, no matter what nation or class of people they belong to, no matter whether or not they own property, no matter into what circumstance they were born, and no matter in what other ways they are different from anyone else or any other group of people.

In addition, it shall not matter to what nation or territory they belong in order for them to have these rights and freedoms. It shall not matter whether the land where they live is independent or not, big or small, weak or strong, they shall still have all these rights and freedoms.

GOAL 3 All members of the human family have the right to live, to be free, and to be safe.

GOAL 4 No one shall be held as a slave. The law shall not allow anyone to hold another person as a slave or allow anyone in any way to sell any person as a slave.

GOAL 5 No one shall be tortured. No one shall be treated or punished in a cruel, savage, or degrading way.

GOAL 6 Everyone everywhere has the right to stand as a full-fledged person before the law.

GOAL 7 Everyone is equal to everyone else in the eyes of the law. The law does not favor one person over another person. This Declaration protects all people equally against any discrimination.

GOAL 8 Everyone has the right to a decision by the proper national courts which will give back to him or her any rights under the constitution or the law which he or she has lost by unjust acts.

GOAL 9 No one shall be arrested, held against his or her will, or sent out of the country in an unjust way.

GOAL 10 Everyone has the same right as everyone else to a fair and public trial by a free and unprejudiced court (a) to decide what his or her rights and duties are in a particular case and (b) to decide whether or not he or she is guilty of a particular criminal charge.

GOAL 11 (1) Everyone who is charged with a crime has the right to be treated as though he or she is innocent until he or she is proved to be guilty according to law in a fair and public trial.

(2) A person who commits certain acts at a time when they are not a crime, shall not be held guilty if those same acts are afterward made a crime. And no greater punishment shall ever be given to anyone than the punishment that was the lawful one at the time he or she committed the crime.

GOAL 12 No one's private life, family, home, or letters shall be interfered with in an unjust way and neither shall anyone's honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

GOAL 13 (1) Everyone has the right to go wherever he or she wants and to live wherever he or she wants in each nation.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave his or her nation or any other nation and everyone has the right to return to his or her nation.

GOAL 14 (1) Everyone has the right to leave any nation where he or she is being treated unjustly and to seek protection and safety in other nations.

(2) No one has the right to leave a nation where he or she is being honestly prosecuted either for a crime or for acts against the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

GOAL 15 (1) Everyone has the right to be a member of a nation.

(2) No one's membership in a nation shall be taken from him or her unjustly. Everyone shall have the right to change his or her membership from one nation to another.

GOAL 16 (1) Men and women of full age have the right to marry and to raise their own families no matter what their race, no matter what nation they belong to, and no matter what religion they believe in. Men and women shall have equal rights to marry, equal rights during marriage, and equal rights to divorce or annulment.

(2) Marriages shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of both the man and the woman.

(3) The individual family is a natural and basic part of society and has a right to be protected by society and by the government.

GOAL 17 (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone or with others.

(2) No one's property shall be taken away from him or her in an unjust way.

GOAL 18 Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, freedom of conscience, and freedom of religion. Everyone has the right to change his or her religion or belief. Everyone has the right, alone or with others and in public or in private, to teach and practice his or her religion or belief.

GOAL 19 Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and the right to tell his or her opinion to other people without any interference. Everyone has the right to look for, to receive, and to give information and ideas anywhere in the world through books, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and any other media.

GOAL 20 (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

(2) No one may be forced to belong to an association.

GOAL 21 (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her nation, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) Everyone has the same right as everyone else to serve in the government of his or her nation.

(3) Governments shall rule only when the people have given them the right to rule. The people shall give this right from time to time through honest elections in which everyone shall have the same right as everyone else to vote. Everyone shall have the right to vote in secret.

GOAL 22 Everyone as a member of the human family has a right to be free of need. Everyone shall have the opportunity to improve himself or herself (a) in his or her work, (b) in society, and (c) in the arts as is necessary for human dignity and the free growth of the human personality. National and international efforts shall be made to guarantee these rights for all people everywhere.

GOAL 23 (1) Everyone has the right to work. Everyone has the right to choose his or her work freely. Everyone has the right to just and good conditions of work. Everyone has the right to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, no matter who he or she is, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and good pay so that he or she and his or her family can lead a life worthy of a human being, helped when necessary by some means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to organize trade unions and to join trade unions to protect his or her interests in his or her job.

GOAL 24 Everyone has the right to rest and the right to have free time to enjoy himself or herself. No one's hours of work shall be unreasonably long. Everyone shall have vacations with pay from time to time.

GOAL 25 (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living that is good for his or her health and well-being and good for his or her family's health and well-being, including proper food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services. Everyone has the right to security when he or she is unemployed, sick, disabled, widowed, too old to work, and at any other time when he or she cannot work.

(2) Mothers and children have a right to special care and help. All children shall have the same right to social protection as any other children whether or not their parents were ever married.

GOAL 26 (1) Everyone has the right to a free basic education. All children by law must go to school until they have an elementary education. Everyone who can do the work shall have an equal right to a higher education.

(2) Education shall aim to help children and adults grow in mind, heart, and spirit, and to teach them to respect the rights and freedoms of all human beings everywhere. It shall be taught that it is good for all nations, religions, and races to understand each other, to be friendly with each other, and to respect each other's beliefs. Education shall aim to do whatever it can to help the United Nations bring and keep peace in the world.

(3) Parents shall have the right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

GOAL 27 (1) Everyone has the right freely to take part in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts, and to share in the good things that science makes possible.

(2) Everyone has the right to receive credit for his or her own writings, art works, or scientific discoveries, and everyone has the right to any money that is paid for his or her work.

GOAL 28 Everyone has the right to live in a national and a world community in which he or she can work for all the rights and freedoms named in this Declaration and make them a real part of his or her life.

GOAL 29 (1) Everyone has duties to all the members of the human family in the world community. It is only through this world community that anyone can fully and freely develop his or her own personality.

(2) In the exercise of his or her rights and freedoms, everyone shall be limited only (a) by the rights and freedoms of other people and (b) by the just requirements of morality, public order, and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) None of the rights and freedoms named in this Declaration shall be used against the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

GOAL 30 Nothing in this Declaration shall be taken to mean that any nation, group, or person may destroy any right or freedom named in this Declaration.

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